

Lewis County Planning Commission

Public Meeting

Lewis County Courthouse
Commissioners' Hearing Room – 2nd Floor
351 NW North St – Chehalis 98532

January 24, 2012 – 7:00 p.m.
Meeting Notes

Planning Commissioners Present: Arny Davis, District 2; Richard Tausch, District 2; Jim Lowery, District 1; Bob Guenther, District 3; Russ Prior, District 3; Mike Mahoney, District 1

Staff Present: Bob Johnson, Glenn Carter, Lynn Deitrick, Jerry Basler, Pat Anderson

Others Present: Please see sign in sheet

Handouts/Materials Used:

- Agenda
- Meeting Notes from November 22, 2011
- Planning Commission Rules of Procedure and Bylaws

1. Call to Order – Introduction of Planning Commissioners

Vice Chair Lowery called the meeting to order and the Commissioners introduced themselves.

2. Approval of Agenda

3. Approval of Meeting Notes from November 22, 2011

Commissioner Guenther moved to approve the meeting notes from November 22, 2011; Commissioner Tausch seconded. The motion carried.

4. Old Business

There was no old business.

5. New Business

A. Elect Chair and Vice Chair

Vice Chair Lowery opened the nominations for Planning Commission Chair.

Commissioner Tausch nominated Jim Lowery; Commissioner Davis seconded. There were no other nominations and the nominations were closed. Commissioner Guenther made a motion to approve by acclimation the nomination of Jim Lowery. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Tausch. The motion carried.

Chairman Lowery opened the nominations for Planning Commission Vice Chair.

Commissioner Guenther nominated Richard Tausch. Commissioner Tausch declined the nomination. Commissioner Guenther nominated Arny Davis. There were no other nominations and the nominations were closed. Commissioner Guenther made a motion to approve by acclimation the nomination of Arny Davis. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Tausch. The motion carried.

B. Discussion: Potential Changes to Rules of Procedure and Bylaws

Mr. Johnson stated staff would like to make some minor changes to the way the Planning Commission does its business. The agenda, for example, mirrors the format that the BOCC uses so there is consistency up to the Board level.

Mr. Johnson stated staff discussed the time that the Planning Commission meets. One reason for changing it from 7:00 to 6:00 is because staff gets paid for their time and if the meetings start at 6:00 there are fewer hours to be paid out. It also allows the meetings to end at a reasonable time and those traveling from the east end or other distances can get home earlier.

Mr. Johnson stated he would like to make the meetings more structured so that the Commissioners are not devoting as much time to the meetings as they have in the past. This year the County will not have all the GMA or ARL issues; there will be work on the Shorelines Master Plan which will start this year but will most likely take three years before it comes to the Planning Commission.

There are also some things staff would like to propose setting in motion to help streamline the process so that when there are mandated updates there is a tighter process. One of those things is how the meeting material is presented to the Commissioners. The binders before you will be updated before every meeting with indexed materials and color coded documents.

Mr. Deitrick asked the Commissioners to go through the bylaws to see if there are duplications that may appear in the code and the ordinance that established the Commission. Because of the light work load, this is a good time to do some housecleaning.

Mr. Johnson also proposed taking an opportunity to go back to a more standard meeting schedule to lessen the work load and focus on policy matters, not worrying about spelling, etc. These are policy decisions you are being asked to make; the more mundane things get done at the BOCC level.

Another proposal is for the Planning Commissioners to take a short course on planning that the Department of Commerce is willing to teach. Some of the smaller cities are interested in sending their planning commissioners also. Mr. Johnson would like a brief (approximately 3-hours) course and have it tailored to the needs in Lewis County and in a setting where there can be discussions and questions and answers with everyone included. The Lewis County Comprehensive Plan will need to be updated by 2015 and the short course will provide a lot of background for that process and an understanding of the statutory requirements to make that process easier for the Commissioners. Mr. Johnson stated he would try to schedule it on a regular planning commission meeting day; there would be no meeting, just the short course.

Commissioner Mahoney thought it was a good idea, especially with the Shorelines, critical areas and the comp plan needing work; Commissioner Guenther agreed.

Chairman Lowery asked about other changes to the bylaws. Mr. Deitrick stated the only change being considered at this time is the time of the meeting. There is some inconsistent language between the ordinance that established the Planning Commission and the language in the bylaws. He would like to research that some and bring suggestions back.

Chairman Lowery stated he understood the 7:00 time was set initially to accommodate people from remote parts of the county who work until 5:00. He asked Commissioner Prior if that would be an issue for him. Commissioner Prior stated it is not a problem for him but he was concerned about other people. He asked how much of an impact will this have on people from Packwood or Randle needing to get to a public meeting if they work until 5:00.

After discussion it was generally agreed upon for a flexible meeting time. The regular meetings could be at 6:00 and if there was a topic that would require participation or comment the meeting time could be changed to allow people to attend. Proper and adequate notice would be necessary to ensure that the public was aware of any change. The Commissioners were in favor of being flexible and holding meetings in different locations depending on the issue and if it related to a geographic location specifically.

Commissioner Davis brought up the issue of conflict of interest – if someone worked for the County would he or she necessarily be in conflict by being on the Planning Commission. Mr. Carter stated for some departments there would be a conflict, such as Community Development or the Prosecuting Attorney's office. Mr. Johnson stated Lewis County's Planning Commission is not a legislative body; it makes recommendations, so technically there would be no conflict of interest. Mr. Carter told Commissioner Davis he would check on other departments.

Mr. Basler referenced 9.7 on page 6 of the Rules of Procedure. The Planning Commission usually extends written testimony for a public hearing for several days. Staff asked how the Commission felt about ending all testimony at the close of the public hearing, which is what the BOCC does.

Commissioner Guenther stated the public understands from past practice that they will have an extended time to provide written testimony. Commissioner Davis stated the Planning Commission has, on occasion, asked a speaker to provide written testimony within a certain amount of time, so he urged caution in not continuing that practice.

Commissioner Mahoney stated there were times when a public hearing was educational to the public. If a person did not attend the workshops they did not know or understand everything that was going on. He wasn't willing to give up those extra days for additional testimony.

Chairman Lowery asked if the public hearings and the work sessions were treated differently. Mr. Deitrick stated they are and the rules of procedure need to clarify how those two issues are treated.

Mr. Deitrick stated the Hearing Examiner closes the record after the public hearing, the same as the BOCC. There is a whole period from when the notice is published until the public hearing for people to respond. Holding this time open sometimes causes problems for scheduling public hearings before the BOCC, especially at the end of the year when there are many issues to go before the Board.

Commissioner Mahoney thought there should be flexibility in this instance, too, for keeping the record open or not. If no one is attending the meeting, there is no reason to keep the record open.

Mr. Johnson stated the difficulty that the Board has had in the last few years is at the end of the year when final regulations have to be adopted. Mr. Johnson is going to propose that the public participation process follows what GMA requires rather than what the County has done in the past, because it has led to scheduling problems.

Chairman Lowery stated if the Planning Commission was a legislative body he would be concerned about it; and he is somewhat concerned as an advisory body. He added, however, that when the Planning Commission closes the hearing, it is not closing all discussion because there is still the opportunity to go before the BOCC. There is some logic in what Mr. Johnson suggested. Mr. Johnson stated the comments do not have to go to the Planning Commission; they can go to the BOCC. That does happen, in fact, and those comments become the record before the BOCC. The Board closes testimony as soon as the hearing is over.

Mr. Johnson stated that the Planning Commission does a great service to both the citizens and the county by holding hearings where people can listen to the consultants, staff and the commissioners and go away from the meeting a little more educated about an issue.

Commissioner Davis thought the written portion of the public testimony could be left open for two or three days; that should be adequate for people to get their comments in.

Chairman Lowery thought the word "allowed" in section 9.7 could be changed to something a little less harsh.

Commissioner Mahoney stated he did not see any reference to Roberts Rules of Order in the bylaws and he thought they should be referenced.

Mr. Johnson stated most commissions adopt their own bylaws and the bylaws for this Planning Commission are adopted by ordinance by the BOCC. This could be a discussion that could be had with the Board. He urged the Commissioners to go through the document and if there are things that don't make sense, make staff aware of them.

D. Short Course on Planning

Mr. Johnson asked if the Commissioners would like to schedule the short course. After discussion, the regular meeting scheduled for February 14 was canceled and the short course was planned either for February 28 or when Commerce could do it, possibly even in March. Mr. Basler stated staff would like to fill the vacant Planning Commission position before the training. Commissioner Mahoney asked that it take place as soon as possible.

There are no rezones to consider this year; there is one remand. Mr. Johnson stated September through December is the time for people to submit rezone requests and UGA expansions and there are none for this year. The work for the Planning Commission will be predominately looking at how to trim some of the fat out of the county comp plan and code with respect to redundant material, etc. There will be some work done in the South County area. Even though the work has stalled in the urban growth areas, staff has a proposal that the Board has authorized Mr. Johnson to move forward that would create some opportunities along the I-5 corridor that fit within the South County plan.

Chairman Lowery stated he is on two committees that provide notebooks. He appreciates the thought but he stated he never opens the notebook because his notes are written on the paperwork he received ahead of time. He doesn't want to waste staff time preparing the notebook if he is not going to look at it.

Mr. Johnson stated these notebooks would be updated by staff before every meeting. It will contain a record of everything and everyone will have the exact same documents. The notebooks do not prevent you from bringing your own notes - paperwork will still be sent out before the meetings. Ms. Anderson will take the notebooks back after each meeting and update them for the next meeting and there will be a compilation of all the materials from the beginning. Mr. Johnson stated the items would be color coded so there is never a question as to what is being discussed.

Commissioner Guenther stated if he wants to make notations in his binder he would like his binder back at the next meeting. Mr. Johnson stated each member's name would be put on the binder.

Commissioner Tausch understood the Board was looking for a new Planning Commissioner and he asked how far west District 3 extends. Mr. Johnson stated Toledo is in District 3, and probably Onalaska. The districts have been re-drawn but that will not affect the current Planning Commissioners' appointments.

Commissioner Guenther stated the legislature is considering putting a revenue bonds bill on the docket. That bill could be from \$870 million to \$2 billion. A premise of that bill is that organized labor and business sit down to figure out how to jump-start the economy and some major construction projects. One of the ground rules was that something gets done in every legislative district. Lewis County needs to think about what that might be and how we can put people to work and is there a project that is nearly ready to go. South County might be that project.

There is also legislation that will talk about siting factories to manufacture bio fuels from woody mass. There is not a better place than Lewis County to site something like that. The legislation talks about being able to activate the permitting process very quickly.

6. Calendar

The meeting scheduled for February 14, 2012 was canceled. Mr. Johnson is still proposing to meet on February 28 but if Commerce cannot schedule a workshop on a Tuesday, he asked if the Planning Commission is flexible enough to do it on another night. Chairman Lowery stated they are flexible but to check for conflicts. He would like to start earlier than 7:00 for the workshop.

7. Good of the Order

There were no comments.

8. Adjourn

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn; adjournment was at 8:13 p.m.